

**Panel Synopsis:**  
**Transformation Challenges for US Military Forces**  
**Engaged in the War Against Illicit Drugs**  
**NDIA SO/LIC Division, 12 Feb 03**

**A Talking Paper**

America is under unremitting assault by agents of a foreign power.

*And most Americans and their leaders are either ignorant of, or prefer to remain oblivious to it.*

International trafficking in illegal drugs is a \$400 Billion per year business.

*Sixteen million Americans (7.1% of our population) are frequent or habitual drug users.*

*For example, there are 980,000 reported hard-core heroin addicts in the United States and over 100,000 Emergency Room visits attributed to heroin abuse annually*

Cities and municipalities such as Gary, Indiana, are literally under siege.

*Gary (pop. 100,000), which has had the dubious distinction of being the “Murder Capitol of the US,” has more than 90 gangs who terrorize its citizens and “own the night.” Gary is America’s Beirut!*

*More American lives and families are destroyed each year through drug abuse than all of the terrorist attacks against US lives or property the past 50 years.*

Virtually all of the traffic in hard drugs in the United States is controlled by Mexican drug trafficking organizations (DTOs).

*Most likely with the complicity of Mexican and Colombian officials “on the take.” Organized crime is getting stronger and better organized—often with better technology than those who oppose them.*

The Department of Defense (spearheaded by the National Guard) has been an important contributor to federal, state and local efforts to stem the tide.

*National Guard support is undergoing transformation as it moves away from performing non-military tasks, such as pulling plants and hand searches, and attempts to bring more technology and analytical support to the fight.*

*Activities such as aerial surveillance, mapping and geodesy, ion spectrometry, language translation skills and evaluation of new counterdrug technologies are representative of the move away from “grunt labor.”*

The United States Southern Command and its affiliated Joint Interagency Task Force-East (JIATFE) have become very adept at using technology to identify and track illegal drug movements through the transit zones and into the United States. As a result of their efforts, airborne drug shipments now represent only 5% of the total.

*But, interdiction assets are insufficient to prosecute all the sea borne tracks identified and further reductions in capability are on the drawing boards.*

*In Columbia, State Department contractors are performing missions that were once the province of USAF Special Operations—a transformational trend that reflects the vast potential that resides in the private sector to reduce the pressure on over committed SOF men and women and to perform sensitive tasks.*

## **ILLEGAL DRUGS ARE AN ASSAULT ON THE VERY FABRIC OF AMERICAN SOCIETY**

Drugs and terrorism and the means to fight them are intimately linked. This is one fight—and the USG and DoD need to recognize that “homeland security” encompasses both the war against drugs and combating terror—both at home and abroad. What America needs most now is synergy, not competition, in the struggle to preserve the health, safety and well-being of the American people and their children.